

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

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INFO TREASURY DEPT WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BONN

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USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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AMCONSUL MILAN

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, IT, EFIN

SUBJ: ITALIAN LABOR CONFRONTS, AUSTERITY: AN INTERESTING PRESS

ATTACK ON BENVENUTO

REF: ROME 0348

1. AN UNUSUAL PRESS ATTACK ON UIL SEC GEN GIORGIO BENVENUTO HAS RIPPLED THE SURFACE STILLNESS MOMENTARILY COVERING THE COMPLEX MANEUVERING OF GOI, UNIONS, PRIVATE INDUSTRY AND POLITICAL PARTIES TO REACH AGREEMENT ON A MIX OF AUSTERITY MEASURES, RESTRAINTS ON LABOR COSTS AND STIMULANTS TO RE-INVIGORATE ITALY'S ECONOMY. IN A JAN. 16 FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL

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IN THE NATIONAL DAILY CORRIERE DELLA SERA, A COMMUNIST JOURNALIST ASSOCIATED WITH CGIL SEC GEN LUCIANO LAMA BLAMED BENVENUTO FOR BLOCKING THE SOLUTION TO ITALY'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, WHICH OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE BEEN REACHED, BY HIS INTRASIGENCE ON ALTERING THE WAGE ESCALATION SYSTEM. THE JOURNALIST (MARIO RIVA, WHO HELPED LAMA WRITE A JUST-PUBLISHED BOOK) SAID BENVENUTO REFLECTED GENUINE AND WELL

GROUNDING RANK-AND-FILE RESERVATIONS. HOWEVER, BENVENUTO'S MOTIVATION WAS TO PREVENT CONSUMPTION OF THE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT, THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND PRIVATE CAPITAL WHICH IS NEEDED TO RESOLVE ITALY'S CRISIS, BOTH WHICH COULD ALSO PAVE THE PCI'S WAY TO POWER, WROTE RIVA. BENVENUTO'S MOTIVATION IS CERTAINLY UNDERSTANDABLE FROM A SOCIALIST POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW, RIVA COMMENTED, BUT ASKED RHETORICALLY WHETHER THE ECONOMIC COST OF BENVENUTO'S SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL MANEUVER WAS ONE ITALY COULD AFFORD.

2. LAMA DISASSOCIATED HIMSELF FROM THE ARTICLE, POINTING OUT THAT BENVENUTO HAD MERELY ENUNCIATED AGREED TRI-CONFEDERAL FEDERATION (CCU) POLICY IN HIS SPEECH TO THE ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES (REFTEL). HOWEVER, THE CGIL HAS MADE NO MOVE, THUS FAR, TO HAVE THE FEDERATION ISSUE A FORMAL COMMUNIQUE CONDEMNING THE ATTACK ON BENVENUTO AS ONE ON THE WHOLE UNION MOVEMENT.

3. COMMENT: LAMA'S COMMENT THAT BENVENUTO SPOKE FOR THE CCU AND NOT ON HIS OWN AT THE RECENT ASSEMBLY IS ACCURATE. HOWEVER, IT IS EQUALLY TRUE THAT THE COMMUNISTS RESENT BEING OUTFLANKED BY THE UIL SOCIALISTS, WHOSE INTRASIGENCE EMBARRASSED THE CGIL COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP WHICH, TO SUPPORT THE PCI, HAD ADVOCATED A MORE FORTHCOMING LABOR RESPONSE TO THE GOI'S REQUEST FOR SACRIFICES. THEREFORE, DESPITE LAMA'S DENIAL, IT IS PROBABLE THAT RIVA'S ATTACK WAS INSPIRED BY THE PCI AND CGIL IN AN ATTEMPT TO REIN IN THE RAMBUNCTIOUS UIL SOCIALISTS AND BENVENUTO IN PARTICULAR. VOLPE

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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